

CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

Report on FY 2005 activities and an application for FY 2006 funds.

Progress achieved and planned activities to meet the first five purposes of CFCIP:

Help youth make the transition to self-sufficiency:

The Children's Division (CD) has used the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) funds to staff one state level coordinator. The state level coordinator position is responsible for program development and coordination, implementation, resource development, training, administrative and budgetary oversight, technical assistance, and policy development.

CD is also using CFCIP funds to staff the 15 ILP Specialist positions located throughout the state. The Specialists work directly and collaboratively with the case managers, foster parents, contracted providers, and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, contractor compliance, on-going consultation and training to agency staff, foster parents, and other providers. They provide direct services to youth in skill assessments and training on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. The Specialists also provide services through youth camps, retreats, and conferences. Referrals for CFCIP services are commonly made to the ILP Specialist from youth's case manager, foster care providers, other agencies or by self-referral.

The purpose of Missouri's Independent Living Program (ILP) is to assist foster and former foster youth achieve positive outcomes in their transition to self-sufficiency. Since 1997, Missouri has provided independent living services to youth ages 13-21. The state funding for the Choices Program for youth ages 13-15 was eliminated by the Missouri Legislature during FY 2004. However, the Children's Division (CD) acknowledges the importance and the federal requirements to serve youth younger than age 16. This budget deficit provided CD with an opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. A workgroup consisting of CD staff and ILP contractors worked diligently to design a practical application program, which will serve youth along a continuum of services from pre-independent living, for the younger than age 16 youth, to the young adults who have exited foster care and may need aftercare services.

Policy was developed to introduce and clarify the new Pre-ILP curriculum for youth 14 to 15. Policy requires all youth ages 14 and older to complete the Ansell/Casey Life Skills Assessment prior to being referred to Pre-ILP or ILP. Pre-ILP classes have begun in various parts of the state.

Children entering into custody of the Children's Division have differing experiences, levels of resiliency, and unique needs. Missouri's ILP is designed to allow maximum flexibility in eligibility for services; regional allocations to support program costs; and access to additional funding on behalf of eligible youth and young adults to address individual needs.

Youth are provided information about available Chafee services by the ILP Specialists, case managers or life skills facilitators. Services are to be used to assist youth in complementing their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure they recognize and accept personal responsibility in preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. All youth ages 16 and over are required to have an independent living case plan regardless of their permanency goal. They shall be involved in their case planning to address the development of skills and resources needed to facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency.

Chafee funds will also be utilized to continue supporting Missouri's Aftercare program for youth who have exited state custody at 17.5 and older, but have not yet reached age 21. Additionally, funds will be used for administration and facilitation of the foster youth advisory boards.

Life skills training is available in all regions of the state. A state core curriculum is used and modules are added to meet needs of youth in different geographical areas. Skills training vary in length and generally last six to nine months, meeting once per week for two hours in a classroom setting. Field trips, seminars, workshops, weekend retreats, camps, and community service projects are also used to supplement the program. Youth receive a small stipend and other incentives for attending each training session and completing homework. It is expected the core curriculum will be redesigned during the next two years to provide youth with necessary skills through a "hands-on" approach.

Policy at the Children's Division currently requires all staff to begin exit planning for all youth ages 17 and older and for those who will be leaving foster care. The purpose of conducting an exit planning interview is to identify anticipated service needs and arrange those for older youth who will soon be exiting foster care. An exit interview must take place:

- At least 6 months prior to the youth leaving custody;
- For all youth at ages 17 or older; and
- Annually, for all youth over the age of 18 who remain in care and custody.

Adolescent case managers were identified in the northern region of Missouri and specifically trained on CFCIP and services available to older youth in foster care. Two one-day trainings occurred. Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance funds were used for this time training. Some are case managers with a specifically identified case load of youth 14 through 21 years old. Some are not carrying specific caseloads but rather are identified as an information and referral person for CFCIP

and older youth services. These workers were trained in February and March 2005 and the implementation of these workers began immediately following. It is the intent to spread these workers statewide in 2006.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) is in partnership with Jackson County Children's Division. JCYOI is a national endeavor to assist youth in foster care in making successful transitions to self-sufficiency and independence. JCYOI's goal is to bring together people and resources needed to assist youth in making the necessary contacts they need for employment, education, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community connections. JCYOI began partnering with Missouri in December 2001 in Kansas City area. CD will continue to work with JCYOI to assist them in educating the communities to support foster youth and to understand the importance of involving youth in the decision making process that affects their lives. JCYOI's purpose is to accomplish three key strategies: youth leadership boards, community partnership boards, and Opportunity Passports. The Opportunity Passport is designed to organize resources and create opportunities for foster and Aftercare youth. It assists youth in accumulating assets and direct experience with money management. Youth who apply and are selected to receive a Passport will receive an individual development account (a matched savings account), a personal debit account, and a variety of available community services at reduced rates or obtain preferential treatment.

Help youth receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain employment:

All youth should have a minimum of a GED as an overall goal. Many efforts were made to help youth gain job training and work experience. Each year 20-30 youth are selected statewide to participate in the training on Microsoft Office Application Software.

CD staff including case managers and ILP Specialists referred youth to Job Corps, Americorps, and all branches of the military.

Youth received job training, job mentoring and placement, and social support. Various community members representing their professions were used as guest speakers. Graduates of life skills training return to the program to serve as paid graduate assistants, interns, class co-facilitators, office assistant and serve as tutors, mentors, and chaperones in activities with younger foster children.

Missouri's Workforce Development also offers five Job Corps centers that Missouri youth can attend. Three are located in Missouri. Job Corps is a residential education and employment training program. It provides vocational and academic skills to young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. The program provides youth accepted into the program with room, board, and spending money while they learn. Job Corps is committed to providing a safe environment for its students to ensure they acquire the skills and preparation they need to succeed in the workplace. 6

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides funding to nine community partnerships to implement structured work site and community-based mentoring. When youth are referred they must complete a 20-30 hours (based on the youth's learning capacity) job readiness training. The curriculum focuses on "soft skills" training, resume preparation and mock interviewing. Once the youth passes the job readiness training, they can begin their job search and then a job mentor is assigned.

Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions:

Early and on-going support for education is extremely important in preparing youth for self-sufficiency. Education is being approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner in the early years. Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. The State of Missouri is committed to ensuring youth have the opportunity and support to access post-secondary education or training.

Educational services and supports are also available to any foster youth to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Services are provided based on the youth's educational needs. Educational supports can include an education advocate, tutoring, individualized plans, and other needs necessary for the youth to be educationally successful.

With the passage of the Stable and Safe Families Act, Missouri now offers Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program. Missouri uses ETV funding to expand and strengthen its post secondary educational assistance to eligible youth.

The purpose of the ETV program is to provide resources to eligible young adults to apply toward the cost of attendance at post-secondary vocational/educational institutions. Eligible ETV program participants are youth who are eligible for services under Missouri's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and youth who were adopted or achieve legal guardianship after the youth 16th birthday. Young adults who are receiving financial assistance through ETV on their 21st birthday may continue to receive ETV services up until their 23rd birthday, provided they are enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program and is making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Youth applicants must be graduating high school seniors, have their high school diploma, be completing their G.E.D. or have a G.E.D. certificate. Youth must be preparing for enrollment in post-secondary education, have been accepted for enrollment or are presently continuing their education at an institution of higher learning including a vocation/technical school. Youth must be making satisfactory progress (minimum GPA of 2.0 or otherwise agreed upon) and provide a copy of a transcript verifying their GPA in order to receive continuing assistance. If youth are attending a program which does not use grades to document progress, the youth

must provide a letter from the program verifying the youth is making satisfactory progress.

Funds provided under the ETV program may be used for expenses related to the cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.

Missouri offers different types of post-secondary institutions, which provides education and/or training beyond the high school level. There are regionally accredited institution of higher education in Missouri which includes two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities and a state college. There are accredited independent nonprofit two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, technical and professional institutions, theological schools, and seminaries. There is also a long list of proprietary institutions that may be accredited and unaccredited but are certified to operate by Missouri Department of Higher Education that generally offers education and training designed to prepare graduates for direct entry into specific occupations or profession.

Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults:

The ability of young people transitioning out of or who have exited foster care to develop a support network, and the influence of informal role models to serve as mentors in a support network is critical. Missouri currently offers personal and emotional support to young people through job placement, formal and informal mentors. Committed and caring adults are essential in guiding young people and helping them maneuver in their community.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides resource coordination for youth and volunteer mentors recruited from the community. These mentors provide positive role modeling, friendship and guidance around employment and parenting issues to youth who are entering the workplace or have become parents.

Community service or volunteering is a critical component in our life skills training program. We find that youth who volunteer in community service programs have an opportunity to meet and develop relationships with adults and other youth who are involved in the same projects as well as develop work skills.

The Missouri Children's Division promotes interaction between youth and dedicated adults through the Transitional Living Advocate program. Through this program youth are connected with adults who become their advocate or mentor. These adults receive 18 hours of training from ILP Specialists on adolescent issues, including three (3) hours each in cultural/race sensitivity, ILP life skills training overview, adolescent development with an emphasis on what to expect from adolescent behavior, emotional obstacles out-of-home care youth must overcome, adolescent sexuality and behavior management via natural consequences. These adult advocates provide the youth a safe place to stay, continued life skills training,

encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for successful transition from CD custody.

The Casey Family Programs "Ready, Set, Fly" curriculum for in-service training of foster parents was available in February of 2004. This training is provided as a supportive tool foster parents can use with youth working in the independent life skills classes to help them practice their skills learned in the home.

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics and Missouri Children's Division sponsored three regional Mental Health Issues in Adolescence workshops in April and May of 2005. These workshops were designed to target foster parents and youth workers to help them to recognize anxiety disorders, eating disorders, depression and signs of suicidal behaviors in teens and to learn about treatment and interventions. Title IV-E funding will be utilized for payment of hours worked by case managers attending this training.

Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age:

Missouri continues to provide services and support for youth in foster care or former foster care youth between 18 and 21 years of age. While in foster care, these older youth are provided with the same services as the younger youth. In addition, older foster youth also receive education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment, prepare for and enter post-secondary education and training.

Chafee services are available for foster youth ages 14-21. Youth who exit foster care on their 17.5 birthday and have not yet reached age 21 are eligible to receive Chafee Aftercare services. Youth may access Chafee services as needed while in the Division's care and custody or as a former foster youth.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a safety net to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited DFS custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the need of the former foster youth. Chafee funds may be expended for a variety of reasons and should be used as a support for the young adult, not an on-going supplemental funding source. Aftercare services may include emergency/crisis intervention services, housing/room and board, educational/job training/employment assistance, and other support services.

Room and board services are only available to youth who exited custody at age 18 or after, but they have not yet reached age 21. Room and board may include security and utility deposits, rent, utilities, food, start-up kits, basic necessities, and basic furniture. For fiscal year 2005, Missouri was allotted \$3,090,942, of that amount approximately \$144,124 was spent in fiscal year 2005 and \$240,941 was spent in fiscal year 2004. About 12.5% of the Chafee federal funding was spent on room and board for Missouri's youth.

Support services provided include life skills training, transportation, child care, clothing, and other expenses as needed. Youth may receive up to a lifetime maximum of \$3,500.00 for any one or a combination of all these categorical services during their eligibility period, excluding post-secondary educational and training assistance.

Missouri holds annual stakeholder meetings to gather input about the CFCIP and to collaborate and engage with community partners. This stakeholder meeting is now being expanded upon to include more involvement from other state agencies, the two Indian Centers in Missouri, and community organizations through the concept of the stakeholder team. This team will meet two times per year to give input and review outcomes. The National Resource Center on Youth Development has continued to help Missouri develop its stakeholder team.

Missouri does not have federally recognized Indian tribes in the state. However, there are two centers, the Heart of America Indian Center and the Southwest Missouri Indian Center, that are very active in the state. Representatives were invited from the Indian Centers to participate in the CFCIP stakeholder team. All benefits and services under the programs are made available to Indian youth in the state on the same basis as other youth.

The Missouri IL Coordinator sits on the Council for Adolescent and School Health (CASH). This council is administered by the Department of Health and Senior Services and consists of various state and county agencies. Its goal is to support adolescent and school health and to facilitate collaboration to promote a coordinated, family, community, and school approach to achieve healthy adolescent development.

The Children's Mental Health Reform Act of 2004 requires the Department of Mental Health to develop partnerships with all departments represented on the Children's Services Commission. A Comprehensive System Management Team will comprise of CD, Division of Youth Services, Division of Medical Services, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Divisions of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability and Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Department of Public Safety, Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA), and the juvenile justice system.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) recently received a challenge grant through the Department of Public Safety, the Missouri Juvenile Justice Advisory Group and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to provide training on meeting the mental health need of youth. The MO Alliance for Youth: A partnership between DMH and the Juvenile Justice for Youth Steering Committee (consisting of a broad range of various state agencies, juvenile court and a parent representative) is working on the development of the content and format of a training curriculum that can best meet the needs of the professionals working with youth with mental health needs.

Through the Missouri's Supreme Court establishment of the Permanency Planning Project, the Family Court Committee developed a Missouri specific "Best Practices" resource guide for use by courts in abuse and neglect cases. The resource guide provides judges with a comprehensive and "user friendly" reference tool for use during the court process including orders for protective custody, protective custody hearings, adjudication, dispositional and permanency hearings. In addition, informational or "bench" cards were developed on the Indian Child Welfare Act, Interstate Compact on Child Placement, and the Multi-ethnic Placement Act. The Family Court Committee, OSCA and CD continue to maintain a working relationship to develop three more additional cards, one of which is for Chafee and ETV. Also out of this partnership, the Comprehensive Child Welfare Conference was developed. This conference established a cross-training for judges, juvenile officer, court staff, Children's Division staff and also included Department of Mental Health participants. This comprehensive training included a workshop on CFCIP and other services to older youth. The conference was held in five regional sites throughout the state of Missouri.

Describe if and how the state has utilized the option to expand Medicaid:

Missouri did not utilize the Medicaid Option to provide medical services to former foster youth who left care at age 18 or older and have not yet reached age 21. Missouri Medicaid has undergone severe reductions and it is expected that introducing an amendment at this time would not garner much support.

Progress achieved and planned activities to meet the sixth purpose of CFCIP – Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program:

Missouri continues to expand the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program to serve eligible youth. Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program and currently uses ETV funding received on October 1, 2003 to assist youth with costs of attendance for post-secondary educational and training programs. Missouri plans to expand its marketing and outreach initiatives to secondary, post-secondary programs, and other agencies or service providers who work with the foster or former foster care population. Missouri's Chafee website was expanded to add ETV information. Enhancements continue to be made as the program develops.

Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. Current requirements for eligible youth to receive assistance are:

- Youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a "C" average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in a training program;
- Youth must be accepted to an accredited college/university, vocational school or certified training program;

- Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized, and;
- There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program.

The major portion of the ETV funding will be used to continue and expand the current program by increasing the number of youth served. With the ETV program, youth will have opportunities to live in a structured community with affordable housing and meals, access on-campus resources, including recreation, health services, and age appropriate activities.

An application process is in place which requires youth to provide information on financial need. The application process and a database will track services and expenditures to ensure that vouchers do not exceed the total cost of attendance or \$5,000 per year.

Eligible youth will be able to access the ETV program through his/her Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialist. Eligible youth are those who currently qualify for Chafee services and are in the process of transitioning out of foster care or former foster care youth between the ages of 17.5 – 21. Foster and former foster care youth participating in ETV on their 21st birthday shall remain eligible until their 23rd birthday, provided they are making satisfactory progress. Post-secondary ETVs will also be offered to youth who were adopted or achieved legal guardianship after age 16.

Current and former foster care youth are eligible to receive the federally funded Pell Grants. CD requires all youth applying for ETVs to submit a copy of their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and an award letter from their chosen school providing all other financial aid awarded. Youth may choose to attend public, private or non-profit four-year universities or colleges, two-year community colleges, vocational/technical schools or specialized one-year training programs. Educational or training programs must be accredited/pre-accredited or certified. Youth must be willing to participate in federal Work Study program or work part-time.

ILP staff will continue to improve the design and implementation of an outreach effort for the ETV program. ILP staff will regularly identify and inform agency staff, eligible youth, placement providers, secondary, post-secondary education and training programs, and other youth serving agencies about the ETV program. Outreach efforts will include staff and informational meetings, brochures, flyers and other written materials distributed and accessible on a statewide bases in all CD offices and public access locations.

Missouri has contacted other states and continues to research possibilities of putting in place a mechanism to track youth who have exited foster care. This will prove to be a challenge to identify and locate youth who have left foster care, especially those who left six months ago or more. Efforts will also be made to partner with

community agencies that have expertise and access to our former foster youth. The Missouri Children's Division is exploring the idea of contracting with a private provider to better utilize the ETV funding for 2006 – 2007. Additional staff or contractors will be needed to assist in the continued program design, implementation and improvement. This additional service will balance Missouri's efforts to have foster youth lead successful and productive lives.

Since September 2003, approximately 146 youth have been served through ETV funding.

Planned changes in service for the next year for both Foster Care Independence and ETV programs:

It is the intent of Missouri to update the CFCIP core curriculum for how we teach our youth life skills. It is the plan to offer a new format in a better effort to reach most of Missouri's foster care youth and provide them with the skills that they need to achieve self-sufficiency. At this time Missouri is consulting with the National Resource Center on Youth Development, consulting with national organizations and other states' CFCIP programs to gather new and successful ideas.

As mentioned previously, Missouri plans to contract with another agency to provide ETV services in an effort to increased awareness and access to ETV funding. Below are other targeted ideas to increase awareness and access:

- Distributed pamphlets and posters about ETV to post-secondary schools and high schools and to the youth.
- Develop Inter-agency awareness/ caregiver awareness.
- Educate high school counselors, court system workers, foster parents and youth on ETV funding.
- Work with Coordinating Board of Higher Education to identify youth eligible for Chafee/ETV funds.
- Distribute brochure to all agencies, community resources, schools, courts, juvenile offices, etc.
- Conduct information meetings for staff, foster parents, caregivers
- Utilize youth in making presentations
- Distribute information/conduct meetings with post-secondary institutions regarding ETVs.
- Utilize PR/marketing campaign (to include PSA's, newspaper ads, etc.)

Another area that was identified by ILP Specialists to strengthen was preparing youth for career employment. Missouri Children's Division staff will strive to:

- Encourage referrals to vocational resources, such as Division of Workforce Development and Career Centers.
 - Explore grant funding possibilities
 - Access Medicaid for vocational testing through the schools

- Collaborate with other agencies to explore career alternatives for youth.
 - develop relationship with Division of Labor and coordinate with their “Shared Vision” plan
- Develop job skills modules/seminars and hold career fairs
 - money management – consumer credit services
 - Interviewing skills
 - hands-on experiences
 - engage in community activities
- Partner with local companies to provide possibilities for employment/mentoring
- Help youth develop problem-solving skills
- Youth receives work preparedness training

Children’s Division staff within all program areas will be aware and engaged in permanency options for older youth.

- Educate all agency programs on importance of their involvement in a youth’s permanency beginning at age 14.
 - Staff utilizing the exit planning interview and tool with youth by at least age 17, per policy, but perhaps as early as age 14.
 - County offices to have an informational video on Chafee, created by \ ILP Specialists, to present at staff meetings, foster parent training, etc.
- Conduct meetings/trainings with agency staff on an on-going basis
- Implement use of specialized adolescent worker.
- On-the-Job Training on Chafee program components – mandatory for all Children’s Division staff.
- Networking and team building activities for youth and CD staff.

Community resources working in collaboration with older youth program to provide services and support.

- Educate stakeholders with Chafee informational video, pamphlets, posters, letters, targeted group meetings, “Walk in My Shoes” program. Collaborate with other agencies to explore career alternatives for youth.
- Develop job skills modules/seminars (examples: career fairs, work force development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Mental Health)
 - money management – consumer credit services
 - interviewing skills
 - hands-on experiences
 - engage in community activities
- Partner with local companies to provide possibilities for employment/mentoring
- Help youth develop problem-solving skills
- Conduct meetings/trainings with agencies, organizations, and resources
- Develop and implement speakers bureau

- Utilize youth in presentations
- Effectively navigate the state payment system so to allow expedient distribution of funds to maintain existing resources and allow development of additional/new resources.
- Include community agency member in Family Support Team Meeting, as appropriate.
- Connect with various community members for recruitment of older youth resource families.